

Newsletter

February 2026



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FROM THE CHAIR

February is our annual general meeting and time to renew your membership. Our membership is one of the lowest in the country. It is still only £8 for the year or £12 which includes the magazine. If anyone would like to join the committee, please let us know. We could do with a couple of men joining to help as we have only got three men on the committee at the moment. Andre has stepped down. Please think about it.

Group leaders

Would you please write your annual report for the meeting and bring it to the AGM. If you cannot make the meeting, please can you send a representative from your group to read it out or send it to our Secretary.

Thanks
Paul (Chair)

FROM THE EDITOR

Welcome to the February 2026 edition of the High Lane u3a newsletter. Thanks to the contributors for their interesting and informative contributions. The Art group has been busy recently; you can see some of their work on the front cover and later in the newsletter.

In this edition, the Chair's message above reminds us that offers of help to run our u3a are very welcome. The ethos of u3a is that we are a self-help group where members play an active part in running their local u3a and the activities so please don't hesitate to get involved. The u3a can't prosper without you.

Regarding National u3a information, we have another varied and interesting selection of online talks and news about the Interest Groups Online fair. Information about the North West summer school is on page 13. As well as these, the newsletter is accompanied by the National Office bitesize Friends newsletter for January. The full version is available [here](#).

We welcome our new members to our u3a and look forward to meeting you at our meetings and interest groups. Your contributions to the newsletter will be very welcome.

The next issue of the newsletter will be March 2026 so please send your contributions to me by 27th February 2026 at newslettereditor@highlaneu3a.org.uk

Diane Saxon

MONTHLY MEETING

The speaker at the January meeting was Colin Mail. During his career as a history teacher, he became interested in giving children the skills of research and understanding the importance of first-hand resources. This would enable them to appreciate the when, what and how of changes that take place over time and if in fact they do.

Colin's main interest is the history of medicine, and he took us through some of the early beliefs and superstitions that people used to explain and hopefully improve health. He talked about the humours, the use of natural remedies and leeches some of which we still employ today in some form.



The next meeting is Wednesday February 11th which is the AGM.

Kath Wareham

Interest Groups Online Fair

Interest Groups Online is u3a's online learning community with over 150 online interest groups. New groups start every month. You can browse the Groups page [here](#). Quite a few groups have a waiting list.

Interest Groups Online is holding its first Fair during February. There is normally a small annual subscription (£12) for Interest Groups Online but during February, there are ten free taster sessions: *Sign Language, Exploring Progressive Rock, Creative writing, Fusion tai qi gong, Local History, Recorders, Women doctors, Canva and Dance Exercise*. This takes place from 11-13 February and is an opportunity to learn something new from the comfort of your own home.

Book your place on [the online events page](#).

GROUP NEWS

ART

This month we were lucky enough to have a workshop with Ali Hargreaves again. This time we had a really great challenge to paint Russian Orthodox churches in a loose pen and wash style. It was a very busy but rewarding session and everyone agreed that we had learned some very useful skills.

You can see the finished paintings at our Annual Exhibition which is on 14th February 10am – 4pm in the Village Hall. Why not come along and enjoy our work and have a cuppa and a chat? Maybe even buy an original painting for your loved one?

We very much appreciate how many of you support this event and hope you will join us again this year. It makes our work feel worthwhile.

Madeleine Hennessy



BACKGAMMON

The Backgammon group is still rolling along although our numbers have dwindled a bit over the past few months. We continue to meet fortnightly in the Bull's Head, High Lane and play for a couple of hours.

It would be nice to have some new faces. We can teach the game to anyone that is interested. It isn't hard, so come along if you fancy trying it.

The next session will be Wednesday 11th February at 2pm.

Ken Jackson

BALLROOM DANCING

Ballroom dancing has restarted after a Christmas break and will continue fortnightly on Friday afternoons in Hawk Green reading rooms (January dances were on 16th and 30th). New couples always welcome.

Walter Mason

HISTORY

We welcomed new member, Doreen before a presentation was made by Marlene Brookes on the life of Labour Party leader Clement Atlee (b.1883 – d.1967). He was deputy PM during WW2 and, in 1945, led the Labour Party in defeating the Conservatives, under Winston Churchill, a result that surprised most observers, including Atlee!

Atlee was the son of a wealthy London solicitor and graduated from Oxford University, after which he practiced as a barrister, before volunteer work demonstrated to him the poverty existing in London's East End. This convinced him to join the Independent Labour Party, becoming MP for London Limehouse in 1922. He assumed leadership of the Labour Party in 1935, retiring in 1955, at which time he was elevated to the peerage as Earl Atlee.



Not surprisingly, Marlene's presentation promoted a vigorous and far-ranging discussion!

Barry Taylor

CURRENT AFFAIRS

We had a very busy Current Affairs discussion in January including:

1. Donald Trump's ideas to buy or seize Greenland, who are members of NATO due to connections with Denmark, USA is also a member of NATO.
2. The Beckhams Family dispute disclosed in all the newspapers.
3. Erasmus Scheme – UK will rejoin the EU Premier Programme 2027 allowing UK students to study in EU countries.
4. Driving Tests – Impersonators are being hired by Learner Drivers to do the online Theory Test and also to actually take the Driving Test in their place. It needs to be investigated but how?
5. Due to an increase in Road Traffic Accidents involving over 70s, should over 70s have eye tests every 3 years – should it be compulsory? Should everyone have eye tests annually? You can have poor eyesight at any age.
6. Teachers in two north Manchester schools went on strike regarding the disruptive behaviour from young pupils in Infant and Junior schools. This is also happening in many other schools – is there a positive answer to assist the schools?
7. As a nation are we becoming less polite to each other? Why is that?
8. A recent survey on Causes of Death shows deaths from Alzheimer disease are increasing. Is this because we are all living longer?
9. Should social media be banned to children under 16 years of age? Good idea but how to achieve it. It needs the Tech Companies to agree to amend their working practices to stop younger people's ability to access completely unsuitable platforms. Are Media Company's only interested in profits at the expense of children's lives?
10. Pubs and all Hospitality Venues – should they all receive the same treatment from Government regarding lower business rates etc. If the Government reduces Breath Test rules; will it reduce drink driving? Will it also reduce income in Pubs?

Irene Podolanski

CRIME FICTION READING

The first Crime Book Group meeting of 2026 took place on 16th January when we discussed *Opening Night* by Ngaio Marsh. This book features Marsh's usual detective, Roderick Alleyn, and has a theatrical setting, as do several of her works. It was first published in 1951.

The story starts with a young New Zealand actor who has come to England to find work. Her money was stolen on the voyage and so, penniless, she finally gets a temporary job as a dresser at the Vulcan theatre which is owned by a distant relative. We are introduced to the cast and backstage support during the few days before the opening night of a new play. They are a dysfunctional group and eventually one of them is murdered.

As usual, there were mixed responses to the book, but on this occasion more than half the group enjoyed it and only two were really disappointed. The main criticisms were that the story took several chapters to move forward and that there was too much theatrical detail. Some felt it was very dated, but others enjoyed this and found it charming, praising Marsh's writing style.

The group next meets on Friday 13th February when we shall be discussing *Next in Line* by Jeffrey Archer. This book is the 5th in his William Warwick series.

We have space for a few more members. Our normal meeting time is 10am on the second Friday of the month. Do get in touch if you are interested in joining us.

Lesley McCall

MEMOIRS

Unfortunately, this meeting had to be cancelled because of the snow. The next meeting will be on 3rd February at 2.0pm in the small hall.

Quote for the month

Opportunities don't happen; you create them. – Chris Grosser

Barbara Kenneth

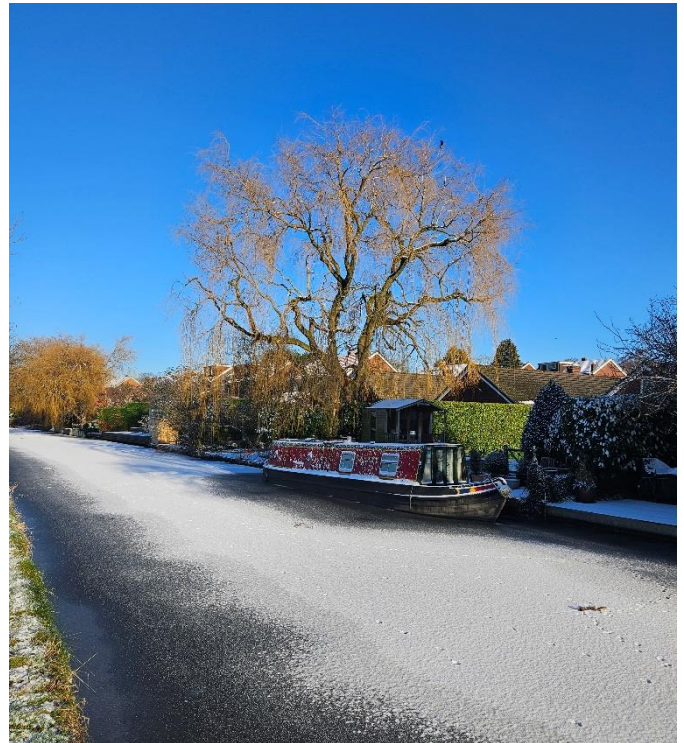
PHOTOGRAPHY

The photography group is doing OK. The online monthly competitions always have some interest. If anybody would like to join in, this month's topic is " WEIRD AND WONDERFUL". I will wait and see what this brings along.

January's competition was " WINTER LANDSCAPE" and we had some really good pictures. Winner was Winter blue sky, Ken,
Second was Frosty day, Mark
Joint thirdView of the Cage, Anthony and Snowdonia, Ken.

If you would like to join in, please send your three entries to me at the u3a email by February 12th.

Ken Jackson



QUIZZING



This month the quiz was set by Margaret. A good challenge! We had rounds of plants and Christmas questions followed by Marys, Manchester, TV, and much more.

Here are a few for you to try:

1. What was the name of the main character in Orwell's 1984?
2. Which is the strongest muscle in the human body?
3. Which Mary was the first female president of Ireland?
4. Which actress was originally called Diana Mary Fluck?
5. Which Salford born writer wrote Love on the Dole?
6. Who is the writer and director of Line of Duty?

Know the answers? Fancy challenging yourself with us? New quizzers are very welcome. More members would be useful to help us build our teams. We meet on the fourth Thursday of the month. Meetings always have a relaxed and sociable environment. You can be assured of a friendly welcome.

Please contact me if you would like to join this group or would like more information.

Diane Saxon

TRAVEL

May 3rd	High Clere Castle (Downton Abbey) 3 nights at Orida Hotel Newbury. BALANCE at MARCH meeting.
June 29th	Cumbria and Lake District. 4 nights at Damson Dene Hotel Bowness. BALANCE at MARCH/APRIL meeting.
May 15th	Day trip to Well Dressing and visit to Bakewell
July 17th	Cruise from Liverpool. 8 nights Ireland and Scotland. Fred Olsen Bolette. Cabins still available



Margaret McDermott

READING

Our book for January was JAMES by Percival Everett which was the winner of the Pulitzer Prize for Fiction 2025. It is narrated by James, a minor character in Mark Twain's HUCKLEBERRY FINN, self-educated, who recounts his adventures, often extremely harrowing, as he attempts to escape his life of slavery and eventually to bring his whole family to the north where he hopes to live life as a free man.

Most of his adventures take place along the banks of the Mississippi where he is occasionally joined by Huckleberry and you realise how important that river is in the lives of all the inhabitants along its banks.

There is brutality in this society but also humour in his story. At one point he joins a minstrel band and has to black up to look more like a negro. Remember the Black and White Minstrels?

The ending is hopeful when he manages to rescue his family from a breeding farm and heads north to freedom?

Our book for February is THE BOY AT THE TOP OF THE MOUNTAIN by John Boyne.

Marlene Brookes

TRIVIAL PURSUITS

We continue to meet every six weeks on Saturday evening. It is a pleasant sociable evening and gives our brains a good workout. We are not competitive and have a thoroughly enjoyable evening.

Jean Barrow

SHORT WALKS

Hello to 2026 when 12 folk gathered in the recreation ground car park at the end of Ashbourne Drive High Lane on Saturday morning 17 January. After chatter the group set off (avoiding 4 stiles) walking up to and along Park Road. Turning down to a waymarker we followed a path to a track. Finding the kissing gate walked under the railway bridge and along a path by the stream. The upward (muddy in places) to another kissing gate and Elmhurst cottage – model stag in the garden. Crossing a field upward to see views veiled in mist over Derbyshire, but



Lyme Cage was still in view. Over a stile onto the road from Lyme Park gate to Platt Wood Farm leading us onto a track taking us to the canal. Carefully walking single file (passing narrow boats) we went through a holly wood by Brookside Tennis Club and onto the back walkway leading past Brookside School and the car park.

Ruth Smith

WALKING

28/01/2026 – Hague Bar – Mousley Bottom Nature Reserve – The Torrs Riverside Park – Goytside Meadows Nature Reserve – Peak Forest Canal.

On this bright sunny late January day sixteen people joined this 4-mile local walk.

We started from the newly resurfaced car park at Hague Bar and followed the Goyt Way path upstream to Mousley Bottom Nature Reserve.



This flat section of the valley, with the River Goyt in earnest mood after recent rain, provided spectacular views in full sunshine.

Our onward route led to the magical Torrs Riverside Park. What a fascinating unique place this is, both geographically and from an industrial archaeological viewpoint. We strolled through this gorge, which was once at the heart of the Industrial Revolution, in wonderment. The millennium walkway facilitates amazing access to The Torrs with the River Goyt raging directly below. Well worth a visit. We had our coffee stop at picnic tables adjacent to the Torrs Hydro – the UK's first community owned and funded hydroelectric scheme.



In 1810 New Mills had 9 cotton Mills, 3 weaving Mills and several Print Works. Initially, the Mills were water powered. The Torrs is at the confluence of two rivers – the Goyt and the Sett, so flowrate is plentiful. Later, with the arrival of the Steam Age, static steam engines provided the Mills with power before the arrival of mains electricity. The Torrs area is home to the Union Bridge, a massive stone multi-arched structure, opened in 1884, it spans The Torrs gorge, linking New Mills and Newtown. This whole area has an abundance of well-built man-made stone structures – Factories, Bridges, Viaducts, three separate railway lines and a Canal.



point via Lower Greenhall Lane, thus ending a superb interesting circular walk blessed with sunshine throughout.

We progressed to Goytside Farm and then onwards to Goytside Meadows where we spent a few minutes trying to tell the time on a vertical sun dial!

The Peak Forest Canal then provided our homeward leg towards Disley and the return to our starting



Some of the team adjourned to The Ram's Head, Disley, for a celebratory drink!

David Burke

NORTH WEST REGION SUMMER SCHOOL

August 2026

North West Region of U3As



Registered Charity No: 1159091

invite applications for the 2026 Summer School

**Residential Summer School Tues 11th August – Friday 14th August
At Manchester Metropolitan University, M15 6GX**

The Metropolitan University is located in the centre of Manchester and less than 20 minutes' walk from Oxford Road Railway Station. The campus has modern facilities, student en-suite rooms with Wi-Fi access. There will be a quiz on the first evening and a "Gala Dinner" on the third and final evening. Speakers will also attend on the second and third evening.

Full Board Residential Delegate: £430. (+£15 car parking charge if applicable;) We include full board for 3 nights, including dinner on 11th August, breakfast, lunch and dinner on 12th August, breakfast, lunch and gala dinner on 13th August, and breakfast on 14th August. Also, tea and coffee refreshments on each day.

Non-Residential Day Delegate: £215 (+£15 car parking charge if applicable) includes lunches, teas and coffees, excludes breakfast daily and dinner on Tuesday and Wednesday but does include the gala dinner on 13th August. Accommodation is available nearby in the Manchester city centre.

An Application form (**available online at northwestregion.u3asite.uk**) must be completed by post or email, Payment can be either by bank transfer (North West Region of U3A's, Lloyds Bank sort code 30-90-16, account 00197002 quoting name and post code) or by cheque (payable to North West Region of U3A's)

£100 DEPOSIT (£50 non residents) PAYABLE UPON APPLICATION; BALANCE BY 11 MAY 2026

queries should be directed to Alan Hough or Neill Stewart at

alanough1949@gmail.com; neillstewart.uk@icloud.com

Post to 8 Salwick Close, Wigan, Gtr Manchester. WN3 6RE

The 8 courses on offer are:-

Archaeology Explorers

Making sense of everyday Mathematics

An Introduction to Geology

Photography - Beyond the Snapshot

Art challenges - the history of colour

The UK and USA Political Scenes

Operatunity – opera appreciation

Intermediary Ukulele

Full course synopses available separately (and on north west site).

National Office Learning Events for February

Some highlights you might want to book.

- 2 Feb Preparing for an AI World
- 4 Feb Challenges in delivering HS2
- 5 Feb Smashing particles – CERN
- 10 Feb Tech for All: Innovations supporting disability and ageing
- 18 Feb How do your medicines work? – Pain Relief
- 20 Feb Memoir writing with Jenny Newman
- 25 Feb Mindfulness and Meditation Series – first of six weekly sessions
- 27 Feb AI in Government
- 3 Mar The new space race

There are many other events. All are free via Zoom. Click here for details and to book a place. <https://www.u3a.org.uk/events/educational-events>

CHINESE NEW YEAR

Chinese New Year is this month: 17th February. It is also the Spring festival (春节, Chūn Jié) and is the most important festival of the year in China. 2026 is the Year of the Horse. According to Chinese astrology, people born in the year of the Horse are confident, agreeable, and responsible. They are decisive but can be impatient. Chinese astrology years follow a 12-year cycle so previous horse years are 2014, 2002, 1990, 1978, 1966, 1954, 1942, 1930 etc.

The start of the celebration is Chinese New Year's Eve marked by a family celebration meal. Chinese people often visit relatives on the first day of the lunar new year, giving red packets (hóngbāo or 红包) containing money. The 15th day of the two-week festival is called Lantern Festival which this year takes place on 5th March. The festival is marked by hanging colourful red lanterns and eating stuffed rice balls, usually in soup.



Drawn by copilot

AND FINALLY a few one-liners

I tried to escape the Apple store. I couldn't because there were no Windows.
The Man Who Created Autocorrect Has Died. Resturant In Peace.
I recently decided to sell my vacuum cleaner; all it was doing was gathering dust.
I was going to look for my missing watch, but I could never find the time

Thanks to onelinefun.com